

The Patersons had a long discussion with their two university students, teasing out the economical situation, the injustice of the growing gap between rich and poor but also the loss of values and morals among all classes. With the wisdom of youth Paul concluded, “You know I think that passage from the prophet Micah is really the answer. ‘Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.’”

(Micah 6:8) With the wisdom of age his father added, “Amen.”

REFLECT AND SHARE ON ONE’S OWN LIFE.

Having read the story, how do you feel about being priest, prophet and king in your own family? Does it make you enthusiastic or feel like a burden? Is it difficult to do this as a family rather than an individual?

FAITH REFLECTION

After reading the passages on Scripture and Church Teaching ask “What is God saying to me about my and my family’s role in sharing in the Mission of the Church? Reflect and share.

SCRIPTURE: Use preferred method for sharing.

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9.

FROM THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

The priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and of his Church can be fully lived out through the love between husband, wife and the members of the family. This extraordinary love demands total commitment, unity, faithfulness and fruitfulness.

“Love and life are the nucleus of the saving mission of the Christian family in the Church and for the Church.” *Familiaris Consortio* 50

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Having considered our own families and what the Bible and the Church teach us discuss how families in general are taking part in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of the Church? Why? Has this been mostly the work of the priests and religious or of dedicated individuals?

ACTION AND PRAYER RESPONSE

What personal and family response are you called on to make?

Pray for the needs of your and other families that they may respond to God’s calling.

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BUILDING THE FAMILY CHURCH

A simple faithsharing programme for families and groups



INTRODUCTION

The Family and its needs has been a pastoral concern for the Church for a long time. Marriage and family life face many challenges today but still remain as the foundation of the Church and of society. This programme consisting of four short sessions for faithsharing in families or groups can in a small way help families to grow in faith and understanding. In 1981 Pope John Paul II addressed a message to families, *Familiaris Consortio*. He spoke of the role and importance of the family in the Church and society and he described its tasks. Each of the sessions in this programme is built on one of the four tasks.

1. Becoming an intimate community of life and of love.
2. Serving life.
3. Sharing in the building up of society.
4. Sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

A recognized format is used. It includes a look at our own lives, a discussion around family life in society, passages of Scripture and short summaries of Church teaching. It concludes with an action response and prayer

Suggested use.

Families could use this during a Family Hour at home, a time possibly around a meal when the family gathers to spend time together, sharing their lives with one another. It can also be used in groups or as part of a meeting. For a longer more detailed presentation of the Church’s teaching on the family the programme **FAMILIES BECOME WHAT YOU ARE** can be used. This is also based on the document *Familiaris Consortio*. Although difficult to read and understand the full document itself can also be studied.

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SESSION ONE.

The Family's Task of Becoming an Intimate Community of Life and Love.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

A LOOK AT LIFE.

Fr Henry was pleased to be preaching a mission to families. He told the congregation, "Each of your families, whatever their kind or size is a little building block of the big Church and in Africa we even call the Church the Family of God. It is your right and responsibility to build up your own family, you as married couples, parents or others in your family. Our mission isn't only here in the parish, but even more importantly in your own homes. For the next few weeks I would ask each family to take an hour a week together to talk and listen and share your own thoughts and hopes and concerns with each other. That is what Jesus did so often with his friends. That is becoming an intimate community. What does the word "intimate" mean? I think it means close, bonded, concerned, kind, even passionate."

Many families did what was suggested but it wasn't always easy. The McKays were a couple who had no children yet, so they talked about their own love relationship and their dreams for the future. The Dlamini's sat around the table with father, mother and four young ones. Busi, the youngest daughter said, "Daddy I love it when you come home early on a Friday night and we all eat and have fun together." Thabo added, "But when you come home late from the shebeen we're all scared." Granny Moses didn't manage to get all the grandchildren in the home around the table together, but she did get them talking about Jesus and his kindness to children. Some families got into arguments, but they found that even conflict is part of being close. "If we can't fight and make up it means we don't really care," Venetia Jones told her teenage friends.

REFLECT AND SHARE ON LIFE.

Having read the story consider how close are we as a family? Do we communicate well and are we really concerned about one another, willing to make sacrifices?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Having considered our own families and what the Bible and the Church teach us also consider how families rather than individuals are doing to be an example of right living in society. Are family values taught and practised? Why? What could be done to help families with this?

ACTION AND PRAYER RESPONSE

What personal and family response are you called on to make? Pray for the needs of your and other families that they may respond to God's calling.

SESSION FOUR

The Family's Task of Sharing in the Mission of the Church.



WELCOME AND BRIEF REVIEW

A LOOK AT LIFE.

Fr Henry was sad that the mission was coming to an end. He felt enriched and knew that those who had attended had learned a lot from him, but especially from spending time with one another at home. "They say a man's home is his castle, but I tell you it is also his church, his first little church where he and the rest of the family meet God every day in their ordinary lives. So when we talk about the Church as the Body of Christ we mean that not only individuals but families are the cells making up the Body. Like Jesus, each family is priest, prophet and king. Being priest involves prayer, worship, giving glory to God. Being prophet is spreading the Word of God which must be applied to our own lives. Being king is not just ruling over, but serving, providing for and protecting. During the week at home I want you to think how that works in your own families." Quite a few interesting comments come out. "I think our family is mainly about service," young Patricia thought. "We are a really good family but we hardly ever pray or read the Bible together although I think Mom does." "I thought priests had to be men, but here it is granny who always leads the prayers and takes us to Church."

whenever possible. But more than that, he was also seen as a good family man and a person that could be trusted. He used to say to his two sons, “You can’t live two different lives. People can see who you are and what you stand for and that is why they trust you. I like the words of that hymn ‘Walk in the light.’ I think that should be our family motto.”

“It can be any family’s motto really,” young Michael added, “even for the child-headed households you worry about.”

Mrs Brown also worked for local government and was striving for “better things” as she put it. Better things for her meant promotion to provincial or even national government. She was an ambitious woman and had left her husband far behind. She was lucky that her mother still mostly looked after the children but she did have some arguments there too. It really isn’t easy for a woman to get ahead in life and manage a family. “What should be my main responsibility?” she asked herself when the family met and she waited to hear what they had to say.

REFLECT AND SHARE ON LIFE.

Having read the story consider what kind of example is our family to the wider society? What is my own role in that?

FAITH REFLECTION

After reading the passages on Scripture and Church Teaching ask “What is God saying to me about my and my family’s role in building up society? Reflect and share.

SCRIPTURE: Use preferred method for sharing.

Matthew 25: 31-45

FROM THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

The family is the first and best place for personal development. Family members are freely given love, respect and dignity and valued as members of their own and the human family. This experience is the example they must give in society. In addition to giving example families must also take their rightful place in working for justice and human rights for others.

Society and the State must value and support families and recognize their primary rights. The Church’s Charter of Rights of the Family includes the right to marry, to have children, to practice one’s religion and have access to housing and work.

FAITH REFLECTION

After reading the passages on Scripture and Church Teaching ask “What is God saying to me about closeness and intimacy in family life?” Reflect and share.

SCRIPTURE: Use preferred method for sharing.

Col 3:12-31

FROM THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

A helpful definition of a family taken from Pope John Paul’s letter to families is of a family is “an intimate community of life and of love, bonded together for life by blood, marriage or adoption.”

God’s plan for the ideal family is one based on marriage where the man and woman as a couple and as parents, together with their children and possibly other family members live together in an atmosphere of love and commitment. In that way they make God present in their home and to each other. Mothers, fathers, children and older persons all have their role to play to build up the human family and so the Family of God.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Having considered our own families and what the Bible and the Church teach us also consider the place of families in society as a whole. Is there enough closeness and unity in families these days? Why? What could be done to help families with this?

ACTION AND PRAYER RESPONSE

What personal and family response are you called on to make?

Pray for the needs of your and other families that they may respond to God’s calling.

SESSION TWO

The Family’s Task of Serving Life.

WELCOME AND BRIEF REVIEW

A LOOK AT LIFE.

Fr Henry knew this was going to be quite a difficult topic. So he began with a prayer, creating an atmosphere of wonder and awe in God’s presence.



‘We thank you Father God for the gift of life.
 We thank you for your generosity in making us, men and women, sexual beings and co-creators with You of new life.
 We thank you for the gift of marriage as a sacrament and so a sign of Your presence in our world.
 We thank you for our families, where You can be at home with us.’
 He then painted the picture. “Sexuality is a beautiful, sensitive subject. So sensitive, it seems, that people find it hard to talk about. Sex is a part of sexuality. You would think it is the only part and the part that too many people are engaged in just for the enjoyment, forgetting that it comes with rights and responsibilities. We each are responsible for our sexual behaviour and the outcomes.”
 Some in the congregation felt joyful, others felt uncomfortable knowing they were not responsible in their behaviour. Later in their families some serious talking took place, but it wasn’t easy.
 Agnes was a single mom and her mother too had never married. Now her daughter was turning fourteen. What should she say to her?
 Paula and James Jones were feeling very excited. They had tried for some years to have a baby and with careful planning she was now pregnant and had let James feel her tummy where she had felt the first fluttering of the new life.
 Anna was worried. Her husband worked far away and did send money for her and the four children. She was worried about having another baby and what if he came home infected with HIV?

REFLECT AND SHARE ON LIFE.

Having read the story consider how you deal with your sexuality in your family? Could you call your behaviour “life-giving?”

FAITH REFLECTION

After reading the passages on Scripture and Church Teaching ask “What is God saying to me about my sexuality and my family life? Reflect and share.

SCRIPTURE: Use preferred method for sharing.

Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:18-25.

FROM THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

God created human beings as sexual beings and so sex is good. As Catholics we believe that God’s plan for sex is that its rightful place is in

marriage where it has two purposes. It is for the couple, to build unity and strengthen their relationship and for having children. The Church teaches that those two purposes should not be separated and that is why contraception including the use of condoms is wrong. Natural Family Planning does not interfere with the woman’s body but follows her fertility cycle.

Serving life through responsible parenthood continues with the need to provide for and educate children. Serving life demands that we protect life from conception until natural death. Even if abortion is legal it is not moral to kill an unborn baby.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Having considered our own families and what the Bible and the Church teach us on the topic of serving life and sexuality discuss this in terms of what is happening around us. Why? What could be done to help families deal with this task?

ACTION AND PRAYER RESPONSE

What personal and family response are you called on to make?
 Pray for the needs of your and other families that they may respond to God’s calling.

SESSION THREE
The Family’s Task of Building up Society.



WELCOME AND BRIEF REVIEW

A LOOK AT LIFE.

Fr Henry began the next session of the parish family mission by saying, “We talked about responsibility last time. That was in our personal lives but families are also responsible for building up society. You can look at families as a foundation and as building blocks of a bigger unit. Any building is only as strong as its foundation and materials. In your sharing at home this week think and talk about that responsibility.”
 Musa had done very well in his job in local government. He had always prided himself on good service delivery and was available for people